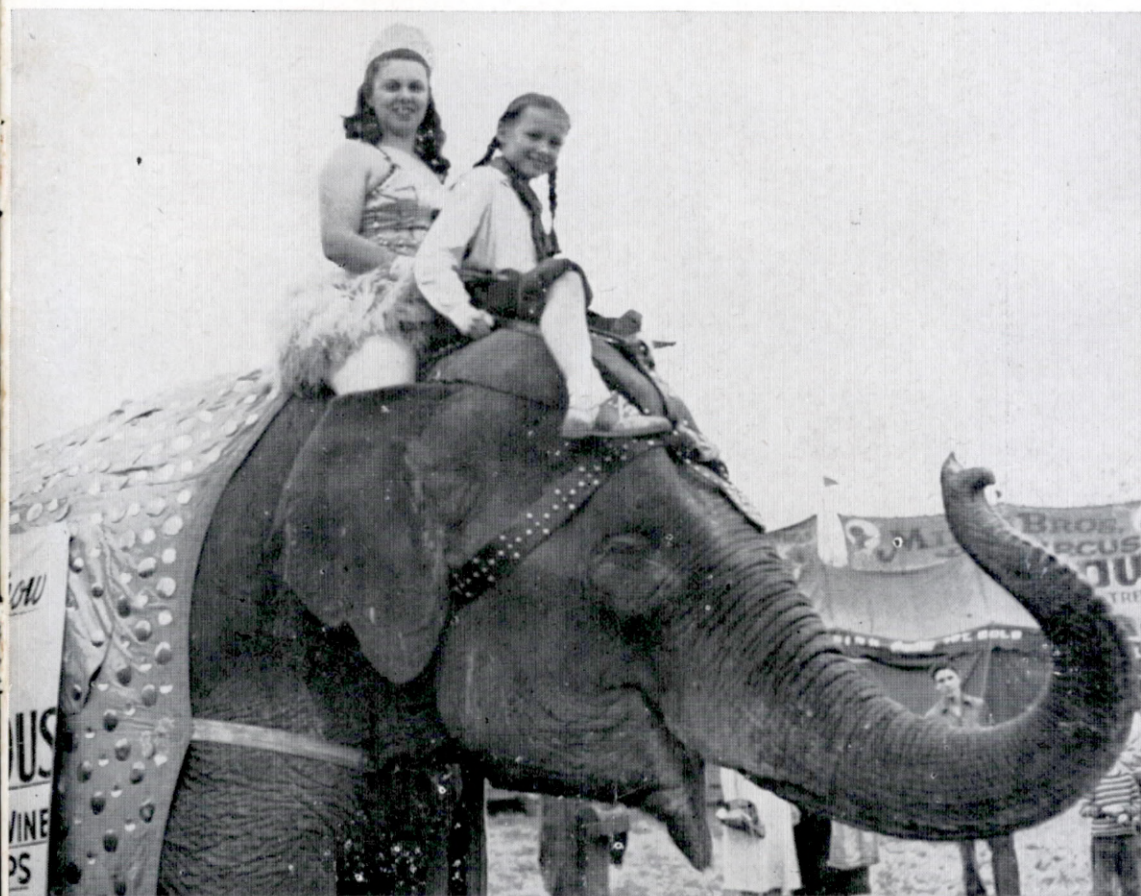


HOBBY

Bandwagon

February 1949

15c



Above is attractive Ann King, of Richmond, Ind. with Virginia Noels of Mills Bros. Circus aboard famous "Big Burma" of Mills Bros. Circus. Ann is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Robert C. King, members of C.H.S. and C.F.A.

— The Circusiana Monthly —

HOBBY

Bandwagon

(Formerly Hobby-Swapper)

122 South Main Street
Camden, Ohio

FEBRUARY 1949

Vol. 4 No. 1

HARRY M. SIMPSON
Editor — Publisher

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Circus Photos

FROM ORIGINAL NEGATIVES

Many from the Wm. Koford Collection

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SHANK PHOTOS

Clarence R. Shank
Member of CHS and CFA

Camden, Ohio

The Publisher Says



Believe it or not, we are gaining time on the release date of the Hobby-Bandwagon and should be back on schedule in two or three months. I hope that all readers will keep in mind that we are late and give their magazine time to reach them before writing we can't answer all of the letters and cards.

The Circus Fans Association of America have announced their 1949 convention for April 13, 14, 15 and 16, at Hagerstown, Md., with the John Pawling Great London Circus, owned by Harold J. Rumbaugh. I'm certain that CHS members will be welcome at this convention and many eastern members will attend this convention.

By the time this issue reaches many readers, opening dates of many circuses will be known and plans will be made to attend a circus on opening day. I have said before and will repeat . . . please be helpful to all Circuses, pay your way to the Circus and don't do anything that would be a "black eye" to the organization that you belong.

There will be many new titles on the road this year and it will be a great year for all fans and collectors.

Sincerely,

Harry M. Simpson

HOBBY-BANDWAGON, published monthly by Harry M. Simpson, Camden, Ohio. Entered as second-class matter at the post office in Camden, Ohio, under the act of March 3, 1879. Printed in U. S. A.

Moeller's Build Early Ringling Bros. Wagons

(Re-printed through courtesy of Milwaukee (Wisc.) Journal)

By LEWIS C. FRENCH
Of The Journal Staff

Remember the old horse drawn circus parade? The block after block of gay wagons with the fancy carving? The lovely ladies in spangles? The loud voiced horseman riding along, warning spectators, "Hold your horses, here come the elephants."

And bringing up the rear—the tooting calliope?

The man who remembers best in this circus city of Baraboo, Wis., is Henry C. Moeller, 79. For the



HENRY MOELLER, JR.

(C. P. Fox Photo)

Moellers put the Ringling Brothers "gigantic spectacle" on wheels. They built the wagons.

Henry is the only one left. He is more or less retired, but he still

has a sparkling memory of the old days when Henry Moeller, the father, and his two sons built a whale of a lot of circus and carnival wagons.

The father, Henry Moeller, sr., was born in Germany. He came to Milwaukee and drove up to Baraboo in June, 1856. There was a blacksmith in Baraboo, G. G. Gollmar. The Gollmars were later a famous circus family.

Moeller had two sturdy sons, Henry, jr., and Corwin, who started making stout farm wagons. All were skilled with the forge, the sledge, the hammer and the saw.

When the five Ringling brothers graduated from their back yard pin and penny shows to take to the railroads they came to the Moellers for "some right fancy wagons."

"Otto Ringling handled the wagons and harnesses, a shrewd businessman who, in the first years, made a nickel go as far as a dollar," recalls Henry Moeller. "Between Gollmar and us, we made the first real circus wagons. No blue prints, mind you, but by 'guess and by gosh'.

"They had to be stout and tight to stand that rugged travel, the cobblestone streets and the continual battering of those days. The brakes had to hold, with those four and six horse hitches of the finest horse flesh in America."

When the circus began making money, the orders poured in for "coh" inspiring equipment, with a rainbow of colors and even real gold leaf, the fragile, thin leaf that took hours to attach to the wagons. There was no limit to using the imagination, for there were circular fans around each wheel, curly cue tops and drops, wreaths and statues galore. Circus art covered almost every inch of space on the flamboyant wagons.

The Moellers scanned the museums and books to pick up ideas for

Next Page, Please

the fantastic gargoyles, strange creatures out of some medieval artist's mind, for bold knights and draped ladies. Some of the work was by Milwaukee cabinet makers. But generally the wood carvings were fashioned by the craftsmen in the Moeller wagon works here in Baraboo.

"Many of the circus people were mighty fine artists," says Moeller. "They would show up as sure as the robins in springtime, generally broke. But they would paint scenes on the sides of the wagons good enough for museum shows—much better than the daubs of modern art."

Whenever one of the Ringlings had an idea, it generally landed in the laps of the Moellers. When cages were needed for the "terrors of the jungles," the tigers or the lions, the Moellers fashioned a cage on a wagon, made of stout steel bars, with removable sides, top panels that lifted up as a canopy and bottom panels which could be removed quickly. There were two huge cage bathtubs for the seals and hippos, and special equipment for the apes and monkeys. Every-

thing was built for a specific purpose—to attract attention.

"When we ran out of ideas there were always cupids to carve and fancy wreaths," recalls Moeller.

Generally about a week before the circus was due to take to the road, some temperamental European performer, the man making the loop the loop on a bicycle or the death defying leap from the circus top, would be around babbling his head off for the fanciest wagon to carry his "priceless paraphernalia." Everything had to fit just right. So we would work the clock around building it. What a headache! But what fun!"

Moeller recalls one hurry-up job. "It was ready except for painting the day the circus was due to go to Chicago," he says. "So we got the wagon battened down on the gondola car and climbed on with a brush and can of paint and painted all the way to Lodi. No stopping the train. So I tossed off the paint can and jumped."

Making a wagon for the steam calliope proved tricky. But the wagon Moeller delights telling

Next Page, Please



Above is the Ringling Bros. Bell wagon just after its completion by Henry Moeller & Sons, famous circus wagon builders of Baraboo, Wisc. The firm was founded by

Henry Moeller, third from left, and two sons, Henry, jr., now 79, fourth from left, and the late Corwin Moeller, at the right end. Photo courtesy Henry Moeller, jr.

about is the one for the bells, a bell for every octave and one over for good measure. They were worked with levers. They built this famous bell contraption in 1893 and it is still being used by the circus.

Until recent years when the circus changed to trucks and stopped holding street parades, the Moellers kept a force of around a dozen men busy all the year. When the circus was on the road they made farm wagons. And when the circus came in from the road, they hired a number from the circus crew to repair, refurbish and make new wagons.

There was other business, too, the old-time stagecoaches for the wild west shows of Buffalo Bill and 101 Ranch and some wagons for the smaller circuses.

"You know those Ringlings were smart. They never missed anything, even on the wagons," says Moeller. "They would spot a defect, even a nail hole, and at least let you know that it was there. I used to tell the workmen to hang a hat or a coat over any little flaw every time any one of them showed up."

The successful business lost its romance when the trucks came in and the parades stopped.

The last circus wagons were made the winter of 1918 when the Ringlings pulled stakes at Baraboo and started wintering in Florida.

"There just wasn't any fun any more," says Moeller. "Besides the modern circus man began coming around with blueprints. Imagine that!"

PHOTOS—BARNUM & BAILEY, In Europe, list on request. Jake Posey, 549 North Maine St., Baldwin Park, Calif. 347

I'll Be Seer—You In Baraboo.

CIRCUS PHOTOS

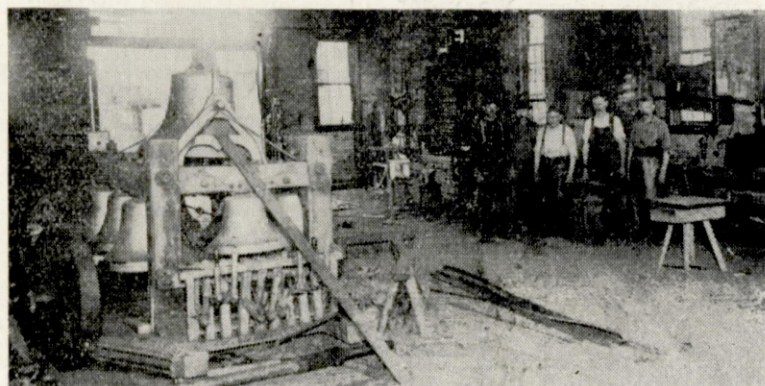
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EDDIE JACKSON

Box 477, Macon, Ga.



Bells being placed on the famous Bell or Chime Wagon built for Ringling Bros. by Henry Moeller & Sons of Baraboo, Wisc. This wag-

on is now used and owned by Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus. Photo courtesy of Henry Moeller, jr.

Letter Reveals Early Circus History

Frank Kindler of St. Cloud, Minn., has loaned his 1906 Barnum & Bailey Route Book in order that we might publish this interesting letter of 1906 from P. A. Older, former circus owner. The letter reads:

Anoka, Minn., July 3, 1906

Mr. Andress, Dear Sir: I take the "Billboard" and saw a list of old showmen but do not see my name in the list. I was well acquainted with every one of them, but one, and they are all dead but me, I think. I am the oldest showman living in the United States. If I live until the 22nd of September I will be eighty years old. I landed in Janesville, Wis., in 1840, twenty-five miles from Delavan, where E. F. and J. Mable lived, and they had the only circus in the west at that time. In '49 I bought a third interest in this circus and traded a sawmill in Janesville for it. \$5,000 was the price for the one-third interest. About seventy horses and eight wagons, eighty-five-foot round top, thirty-foot dressing top. We had twenty led horses on the road, splendid spotted and creams, horses were cheap—could buy the finest horses from fifty to seventy dollars a head. We used to get kept for man and horse per day for fifty cents to one dollar, and single, half the price. We never had to pay for ground to show on, our license would be from five to ten dollars a day, no billboards in those days, we had to put our bills under stoops, in bar-rooms, and in barns or any place where rain would not wash them down; we put up from twenty-five to seventy-five sheets in a town and did not know anything about paste; all tacked up with tacks; we would get scraps of leather from harness shops in Chicago, and winters the boys would cut them out with a punch like a gun wad, and others would stick the tacks in them and the advertiser would take two or three bags of them and they would last him half the season. For lights we had to use star candles; for chandeliers, four strips of board with holes in them

and the boys had to sharpen the candles every day after the show was out and stick them in, already to light at night; two such chandeliers around the pole, and when the wind blew, the grease would run down on the ringmaster, Mr. Walter Waterman. The Barnum folks remember him, he died in Little Rock while with the Barnum show. He came west with the Mable's, was very dressy and proud—nice man. In those days it was worth a man's life to run a show. We used to have a fight with the "rubes" two or three times a week, all they used to think of was clean cut the circus; lots of towns we would make never had a show two seasons and never saw a circus bill but our own.

Old John Robinson made only three stands in Indiana, Fred Bailey was his advertiser; this man covered up our dates, I sent a man on and postponed his show one week and posted our dates. Bailey and I had many laughs about it, he and myself were great friends. I have forgotten to mention how things have changed. There is a man keeping a livery stable in Long Branch by the name of Jake Showles, who was our property boy when I was a partner of E. F. & J. Mable in 1850; we used to pay him ten cents to take down all the large bills, five cents for the small ones and save all the tacks and leathers on them. Our large bills were six or eight sheets, we had a box in front of our trunk wagon where we packed them away. The advertiser would come back to the company and get them and rub the date out and put them up again—we often used them in three or four towns until they were all worn out. We had one rider, Harry Buckley, and he could not keel over on a big pad—the pad being as large as a barn door, it took two men to lift it on a horse. Walter Waterman rode a four-horse act. I think it was in 1850 we were in Alabama. I went to see Old John Robinson's Circus. It was Robinson and Eldridge at the time; they were out of star candles, he had a lot of niggers with pine torches standing around the ring. Old John rode a two-

horse act, he could just stand on two pads and hold the reins, and it smoked so, one could hardly see the horses. All were coughing and the niggers yelled and hollered and Old John Robinson swore at every jumpy of the horses. They had the sides down, but lots of ladies could not stand the smoke and left, and never will I forget being at such a circus performance. You can use as much as you please of this, or not any, and throw it in the waste paper basket. I am so nearly blind I can't write and I hardly think you can read it. I could write quite a large book of early showing and some comic things. I lost my show in Shreveport, La., on account of yellow-fever quarantine, which struck me there with forty cars after P. T. Barnum and I had dissolved in November. And March 1875 or '76, I think he shipped home to Bridgeport and I fitted up in November and lost everything in three months and had to give away the show. Please let me know when the books is out and I will buy one; don't fail. Yours respectively.

P. A. Older

(Taken from Barnum & Bailey Annual Route Book of 1906)

TRADE—Photo postcards of Chicago and Worlds Fair of 1933.

WANTED—Photos or anything pertaining to side shows or human oddities.

JENKINS

5955 Komensky Ave. Chicago 29, Ill.

WANTED

1 copy of "Sawdust and Spangles" by W. C. Coup. Reasonable price and fair condition. Also want pictorial lithos of Gollmer Bros. and John Robinson Circuses.

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The Bandwagon

News and Activities of the
CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Founded In 1939
By Don Smith

Harry M. Simpson Editor

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JAMES MacINNES, JR. WEDS STAR OF THE BIG TOP

Jimmie, the 20-year-old member of the MacInnes family of Alburdis, Pa., was recently married to June Mixom in Miami, Fla. The young bride is the daughter of one of the owners of the Beers-Barnes Circus. Jimmie is employed with the same circus, and like his father, James, sr., is a member of the Circus Historical Society. Jimmie hopes to be a boss of a big top and is learning the show business from the ground up. . . . his bride is already a star performer with the Beers-Barnes Circus. The young couple spent their honeymoon in Alburdis and returned to winter-quarters in Florida.

CHS PHOTOS

Two photographs are being mailed this month by the Circus Historical Society to their members. One photo shows the "France" Bandwagon and the negative was furnished by James McKenna of Pawtucket, R. I. . . . this picture was taken at Robbins Bros. Circus at Worcester, Mass. in 1938. The second photograph shows the Loyal Repenski Family and the negative was furnished by Robert D. Good of Allentown, Pa. . . . this photo was taken at the Great Allentown (Pa.) Fair in Sept. of 1946.

EDMUND P. R. HOLT

Edmund P. R. Holt of Allentown, Pa., member of Circus Historical Society and past president of the Allentown group, passed away in Washington, D. C., while playing the bass drum in the President Truman inaugural parade. Mr. Holt was a devoted collector and builder of miniature circuses. A sister and nephew, along with a host of friends in the CHS and circus world, mourn his passing.

RICHARD C. ELLSWORTH

It is with regret that we record the death of Richard C. Ellsworth of Canton, N. Y., on Sept. 21, 1948. Mr. Ellsworth was a member of the Circus Historical Society and had built a miniature circus known as the "Ricardo's Circus" . . . this circus now becomes the property of the New York State Historical Society and will be placed in their museum at Cooperstown, N. Y. Mr. Ellsworth leaves a host of friends in the CHS.

Harry M. Seislove of Allentown, Pa., pens that it has been forty-four years since he was employed with the Barnum & Bailey Circus. Mr. Seislove states that he was in the chandelier department and that they used Wier & Bolty lights along with two hundred Welsbach mantels daily to light the Big Top.

MUSCLE POWERS PUBLISHES STORY BY KATTENBERG

Burns M. Kattenberg, member of CHS and manager of the Mansfield-Leland hotel in Mansfield, Ohio, had his story "Forgotten Acrobats of the Arena" published in the February issue of MUSCLE POWER magazine. It is a fine article on contortionist and is illustrated with four photos.

I'll Be Seeing You In Baraboo in 1949.

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LUCIA LEERS NEEDS HELP TO RESUME CIRCUS CAREER

Recent news received in this country of Luisita Leers indicates that she intends to make a comeback as a circus artist. Most collectors are familiar with this great aerialist of the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus from 1929 to 1936. Miss Leers has been credited with doing 190 complete revolutions of the muscle grind and had the honor of performing before President Calvin Coolidge and other notables.

Miss Leers was obliged to bring her illustrious career as a circus star to an end because of the war. Now she has seriously considered offers to resume it. The one big obstacle that has hindered this is the loss of strength and physical condition caused by inadequate diet. It is utterly impossible for her to secure sufficient food, unless kind friends from this country send parcels of food to her. In this connection there is a particular need for vegetable fat, dried fruits, sugar, cocoa, rice, powdered milk and powdered eggs, canned meat and fish. A contribution of food to this great performer will be greatly appreciated. Her address is: Miss Luisita Leers, Helenenstrasse 1. (20b) Bruanschweig, Germany (British Zone).

YOUNGEST READER OF HOBBY-BANDWAGON

The distinction of being the youngest subscriber of the Hobby-Bandwagon goes to Gail B. (Coke) Ulrich, granddaughter of Mr. and Mrs. Les Ulrich of Sheffield, Mass. Miss Ulrich, who is 10 years of age, resides at Poquonnock Bridge, Conn., is an excellent cow girl rider and has taken part in the "spec" of many circuses. "Coke" caught over thirty performances in 1948.

THANKS

The publisher wishes to thank the following for items received during past weeks: G. A. Greasby, Bette Leonard, W. H. Woodcock, Chalmer Condon, Don Cavilla, Rurt L. Wilson, James MacInnes, Clarence R. Shank, Hi Lo Merk, John B. Harrow, Paul F. Van Pool, C. Spencer Chalmers, Karl Cartwright, Eddie Jackson, Thomas I. Noonan, Robert C. King, Allo Di-

avolo, George Churchill, J. A. Havirland, Mrs. Ruth Christensen, Dr. Harrison Powers, Glen Tracy, Lou Hayek, Freddie Freeman, Rose Gould Trio, Alexander Konyot, Ward-Bell Flyers, E. L. Churchill, William W. Moore, Walter B. Fox and Ed Hillhouse.

Circus Articles

HOBBIES, Jan. '49—"Circus Borrows Big Names" by A. Morton Smith HOBBIES, Feb. '49, "Aristocracy of the Circus" by A. Morton Smith, illus. MOVIE LIFE, Jan. '49, "Sprinkled With Sawdust" (19 illus.) story of Bert Lancaster CORNET, Feb. '49, "Gambling With Death at Niagara" story of Blondin SATURDAY EVENING POST, 1-15-49, "Manhattan's House of Bedlam," illus. SEE, Mar. '49, "Hollywood Circus" (10 illus.) more about benefit performance BLUE BOOK, Feb. 49, "Parade Wagon" by Robert Barbour Johnson (fiction) THIS WEEK, 10-31-48, "Bears In The Air" (4 illus.) same issue, "Hidden Art Treasures" (tattooing) by Rhoda Roder PERU (Ind.) TRI-PUNE, Thurs. Jan. 27, 1948, several interesting articles about the history of this one-time circus capital MUSCLE POWER, Feb. '49, "Forgotten Acrobats of the Arena" by Burns M. Kattenberg (CHS member) TRUE, Jan. '49, "The Big Cats Walk Alone" by Daniel P. Mannix, (5 illus.).

I'll Be Seeing You In Baraboo in 1949.

WANTED GREAT WALLACE CIRCUS ROUTES

— Still Need —
1884, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9

Please advise which ones you have and what you are asking for same. Just a typewritten list will suffice. I do not care for the route book.

DR. H. POWERS
110½ E. Washington Ave.
South Bend 1, Ind.

SECOND OPENING

Ladies and gentlemen and everyone who has been referred to as directly the opposite on occasions far too numerous to any longer bother preventing their being mentioned.

It happened like this; I was sitting down at the corner drug store, hungry enough to order a malted milk with a dozen eggs, twenty-seven yeast cakes, and a hospital size Horlicks malted milk in it, if that soda girl ever got back to me, when I saw Cliff coming in the front door. That food appetite was immediately replaced by that one for entertainment that Cliff was invariably able to supply.

Cliff's show had been in quarters for two weeks now and I'd been expecting him along anytime because he always drops off here to let us know how perfect the escapade was that he had just experienced and what a masterpiece the one he's headed for will be certain to turn out to be.

You could see the oysters on the half shell and the egg in sherry oozing out of this latest one of his by the time he'd reached the cigar counter. Cliff's wife quit leaving him fully two seasons ago. When you'd ask him about himself it was always droll circumstance that he'd just been through, either his wife had left him again or he'd wrecked his car. The auto wrecks maintained their same forte but the old girl just quit leaving him because she'd discovered that there was invariably a gate on any such entertainment no matter where you found it and with Cliff supplying it you'd be bound to receive a full value for as burned up as he'd made you, on his, each and every performance, so she just began staying on in spite of his antics.

Well he sat right down across from me and went into his act. This one was different. This one wasn't more of the same thing. The twenty four hour man had lived it up for him and he'd sent his wife on ahead to the Imperial Hotel in Detroit, to wait until he arrived there giving a full and complete explanation of his delay, an especially selected one for this particular occasion. He'd just kept playing return engagements with explanations, however, the old girl was a pretty good actress, too. She'd schooled herself into posing

as someone who was accepting these stories as the real McCoy, it made a good act.

At this point I became the crowd on the midway and Cliff climbed on the box and began making his opening. The dinner in the Hotel started off like this he told me. I'm interested in just one thing he told the lady conversation along other lines will be time wasted. I was way ahead of you she replied, wasted time seems to be your specialty, look at all this useless conversation your engaging in right now. So, down went the coffee, he got a couple of suit cases out of the car at once and they retired from the dining room to the elevator, a boy joined them at once and when they arrived at the room he gave them fifty cents. Right here is where I cut in, now wait just a minute Cliff, you've been slipping me dope in gigantic proportions for years regarding the extent to which you've been around, diplomas from case history classes that end up in full cases, you know you could have gotten by giving that bell hop 25c. Now don't sit there and tell me that this particular circumstance was so different from the others that you became completely careless regarding twenty-five cents, one fourth part of a dollar.

Well, that wasn't exactly the situation he replied, you see there wasn't anything in those suit cases and I figured that extra 25c was the least possible gate he'd accept for keeping quiet about it.

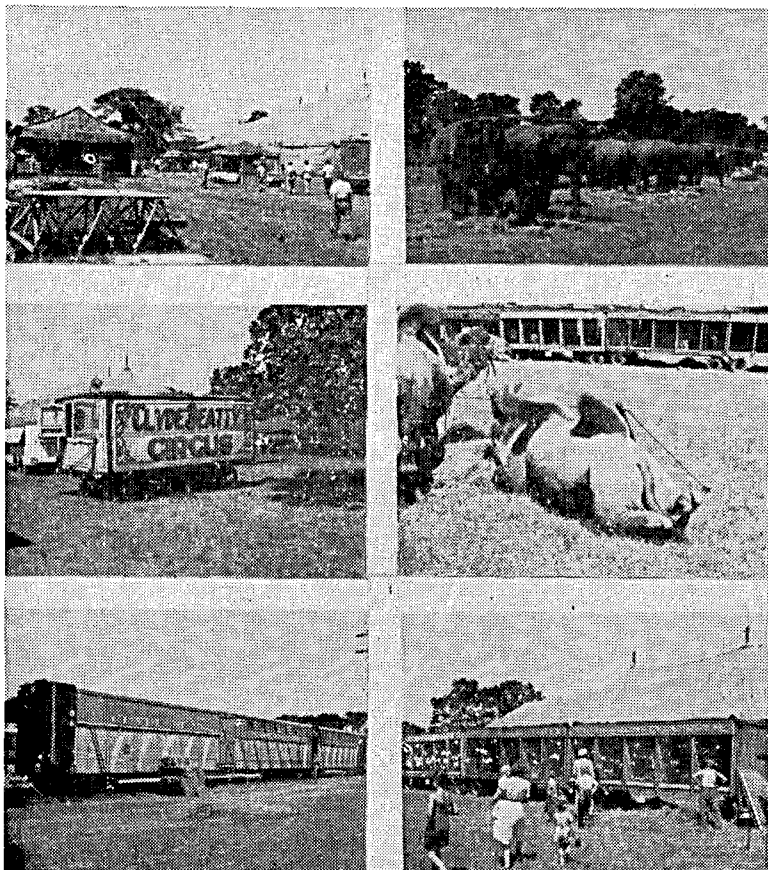
Just a gasped out "oh" was the only answer I had for that one as I finished that last mouthful of the malted milk of gigantic proportions.

Cliff took right off from there to give me the complete info on the number on his program.

The leading lady waiting around the Imperial would give him the old ice for about a day or two, but he could fix that too.

The old girl would be sort of fed up on sawdust and spangles so they'd slip on out to the Top Hat at River Rouge where Bruce Roy and his orchestra are playing the show and Don Harmon is using his tenor voice for the ring master's whistle. Ross Bartlett's ivories will replace all elephant tusks and when that master manipulator of piano keys chords them the

Clyde Beatty Circus - Season 1948



The above photographs of the Clyde Beatty Circus were taken by Charles Philip Fox of Oconomowoc, Wisc., author of the recent

circus picture book "CIRCUS TRAINS." This great circus is owned by Clyde and Harriett Beatty, noted wild animal trainers.

down beat on the overture, Cliff and the missus will tag it for that trumpet man's bugle call and due a spec around that hippodrome track changed over into a level waxed dance floor, arm in arm, for the benefit of all spectators and history that won't stop anywhere short of a case will be in the making.—Mac

—o—

MacMinn's "The Theatre Of The Golden Era In California" contains an interesting chapter on early circuses with three illustrations. One is of an H. C. Lee her-

ald of 1859 and other two are advertisements of Rowe & Company's Pioneer Circus of about 1850. The book also contains a chapter on minstrel shows.

ADVERTISING RATES

1 inch	\$ 1.00
2 inches	\$ 2.00
4 inches	\$ 3.00
Full Page	\$10.00

Copy and remittance must be mailed at once to insure publication.

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